

William J. Matheson Building
145-155 John Street
New York
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-6013

HABS
NY
NY-6013
56-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HABS
NY
31-NEVO,
56-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILLIAM J. MATHESON BUILDING

HABS No. NY-6013

Location: 145-155 John Street, New York, New York County, New York

Present Owner: New York Telephone Company

Present Use: Office building and restaurant

Significance: The South Street Seaport declined at the end of the nineteenth century and the area shifted to greater industrial and office use. The William J. Matheson Building represents this trend in the city's history. Built in 1897, the ten-story office building replaced two earlier structures, and in 1919 the three early nineteenth century structures at 145-149 John Street were remodeled and incorporated into the plan of the larger building.

Historical Description

General Statement

The William J. Matheson Building at 145-155 John Street is composed of four distinct structures, three of which were altered substantially in 1919, and connected to the fourth to form a single structure (Alt. 555/19). The most recently constructed of the four (1897), a ten story building occupying former lots 29 and 30 (182 and 184 Front Street), is referred to in the records as 21 Burling Slip and then later as 151-155 John Street. The three older buildings at 15, 17 and 19 Burling Slip are referred to as 145- Burling Slip after their incorporation into a single structure in 1919. All four buildings are described separately below. A discussion of the 1919 alterations and subsequent use will then follow.

15 Burling Slip, Formerly Lot 33

The building at 15 Burling Slip (John Street) became a corner structure in the early 1960s when Water Street was widened and the buildings on its east side were demolished. Originally the side of this building adjoined the rears of neighboring structures 181 and 185 Water Street on the west and the side of 17 Burling Slip on its east.

The construction date is at present unknown. Tax records between 1795 and 1808 are unavailable and the records spanning the years 1808 to 1896 do not note any improvements made on this lot nor are there any significant jumps in the lot's assessed value. An 1801 conveyance (L59D433) and a shift in Burling Slip addresses between 1800 and 1802 (NYD) suggests the possibility of circa 1801 construction but the exact date remains uncertain.

City directories indicate considerable turnover in the building's occupants. The earliest entries (1800-1810) refer to a boarding house run by J. K. Delaplane. Such facilities were a common feature of New York City life and Burling Slip's proximity to the port's countinghouses, wholesalers and the South Street wharves would account for the boarding house's location here (Lockwood 1976:25). Other boarding houses in what is now the South Street Seaport Historic District included William Sharpe's at 271 Water Street which was in existence between 1836 and 1863. In 1850 this small three story building housed 39 people including single people and entire families. Jane Rosted's Boarding House at 132 Beekman Place housed over 40 people, many of whom were Irish and Scottish immigrants (see Rosebrock 1977). Elsewhere on the block, T. P. Orton and also Leonard and Rose operated a Boarding House at 22 Fulton from about 1829 to 1835. A fisherman, "segarmaker," and a grocer are listed among its occupants (Tax Records, NYD).

Delaplane's Boarding House seems to have closed after 1811 and until 1819 the building housed the offices of a series of merchants and attorneys. A ship-chandler and shipmaster also appear briefly in the directory listings. The building served as a private residence between the years 1819 and 1940. Among its occupants were Silas Carle (from 1819 to 1840), owner of a pharmacy at 199 Water Street; James Rhodes (1825-26), who owned a tavern at 19 Fulton Street; and Henry Storma (from 1829-39), a saddler with a shop next door at 181 Water Street.

Residential structures, other than boarding houses were fast disappearing from the Seaport area by the 1830s (Lockwood 1976:25) and in 1840 a cooper, Henry Robinson, opened his shop in what had been a private residence at 15 Burling Slip. All three Burling Slip addresses housed coopers at different times during the nineteenth century (15 Burling Slip, 1840-1858; 17 Burling Slip, 1817-1837; and 19 Burling Slip, 1809-1816, 1826-1852) (NYD). Although there was always a need for barrels in the busy port, the demand must have increased greatly after the 1825 completion of the Erie Canal. Among those backcountry exports requiring barrels for shipping were potash, flax seed, salted meat, and flour. Between 1825 and 1856 eastbound cargo headed for New York on the Erie Canal rose from an annual total of 185,000 tons to 4,116,082 tons (Sibion 1939:78,88-91). Preparing barrels for domestic and international shipping kept the Burling Slip coopers busy and Henry Robinson remained at 15 Burling Slip until 1859 (NYD).

Little documentary evidence, aside from ownership, is available for this structure between 1860 and the turn of the century. Erskine Hewitt, a merchant, and a Frank Skiany and Company, tea wholesalers, are listed here during the first decade of the twentieth century (NYD). Erskine Hewitt, listed here briefly, was the son of Abram Hewitt of Cooper and Hewitt, located next door at 17 Burling Slip.

17 Burling Slip

The structure at 17 Burling Slip was built in 1843/4 (Tax Records) by Peter Cooper and for the remainder of the nineteenth century the structure housed the offices of three remarkable American financial, political and philanthropic leaders. The firm of Cooper and Hewitt, here until 1906 (L102p446) was involved in both financial and manufacturing aspects of a wide range of industries including glue, iron, railroads, and coal mining.

19 Burling Slip

This structure dates to 1817 when Stephen Allen, owner of the sailloft at 186 Front Street, bought the lot and replaced an older structure here with a new four-story building (tax records, L119, p513). Initially, the structure housed a wholesale grocer, as did many of the other Front and Fulton Street buildings, but after 1825 and continuing for the next 25 years a series of Coopers occupied the building.

In 1840, Samuel Coon, a junk dealer, joined the Coopers, Thompson and McConnell at 19 Burling Slip. The Coopers were replaced by Nelson Coon (probably the junk dealer's son) in 1845 and Kieren Egan, another junk dealer, arrived in 1848, Samuel Coon having moved out in 1844. Kieren Egan remained here throughout the remainder of the century and was listed alternately as a dealer in junk, bagging paper, and cotton (NYD). Late nineteenth century building records describe the building as a cotton warehouse (Comp. 6930/1897). Nineteenth century paper mills often established city offices and warehouses to both purchase rags and sell paper and this would explain the above sequence (Hurlbut's Papermaker Gentleman Vol. 2, No. 2, 1934). By 1915, 19 Burling Slip housed a paint shop and factory (Alt. 965/15).

21 Burling Slip/151-155 John Street/184 Front Street

Two smaller early nineteenth century buildings (tax records) were replaced in 1897 with a ten-story office building, designed by architect George P. Chappell for owner William J. Matheson (N.B. 705/97). Building department records describe it as an office and warehouse building and its tenants during the first decades of the twentieth century included the Cassela Color Company (1915) and the National Aniline and Chemical Company (1918) (Alt. 1081/15 and Alt. 555/19). In 1919, 21 Burling Slip was connected to its neighbors 15, 17, and 19 Burling Slips (Alt. 555/19) and these alterations are described below.

145-9 and 151-155 John Street, 1919 to Present

Building department records describe the process whereby four buildings were altered in 1919 to form one internally connected structure. The buildings included 21, 19, 17, and 15 Burling Slips which were owned and managed by William J. Matheson and leased to the National Aniline and Chemical Company (Matheson is listed as president).

The three older structures were to be incorporated into a single structure. Plans submitted and apparently accepted describe the following alterations. The "front of roof" was to be raised to the same height as the rear. The interior walls were to be removed and iron columns and girders substituted. The Greek Revival exteriors visible in Nevins 1935:plate 38 were removed and an "entirely new" front constructed (the plans for the first story note that "brick piers substituted for granite piers").

Since 21 Burling Slip was to be connected to the resultant single structure, the plans also called for lowering and raising of floors in order that they be level with the floors of 21 Burling Slip. Openings of the walls in each story were then cut, thus completing the connection (Alt. 555/19). In 1941, 185 Klater Street (no longer standing) was connected to this complex of buildings (B.N. 4674/41). A Certificate of Occupancy from this year indicates that the buildings still housed manufacturing facilities, offices, and warehouses (C.O. No. 27902). At present, a ground floor restaurant (fronting Water Street) and offices occupy this space.

SIGNIFICANCE

Historical Significance

The William J. Matheson

Building lies within what was once the heart of New York City's Maritime District. Robert Albion (1939), the port's foremost historian, has described nineteenth century South Street as "the most maritime of thoroughfares." An 1852 survey of Lower Manhattan indicates the relationship between the block and the surrounding area: "South Street is occupied by the principal shipping houses and the offices of most of the foreign packet lines. The dry goods, jobbing, and importing business, formerly confined to Pearl Street, has extended to William, Broad, Pine, Cedar, Liberty, etc. "On Water and Front Streets, and in the vicinity, are the wholesale grocers, commission merchants, and mechanics connected with the shipping business" (quoted in Albion 1939:266). The deeds, directories, and tax records examined for the area support this characterization of Front and Water Streets. The occupancy history of the block reflects the port's history, illustrated in the careers of three former occupants, Stephen Allen (186 Front Street), Abram Hewitt, and Peter Cooper (17 Burling Slip).

As mid-century approached, New York City, because of the Erie Canal and the "Auction System" had become the central market for the domestic distribution of imported goods. The trade spawned an army of specialized middlemen, many of whom appear in the city directories under the general classification "merchant."

The 1852 survey quoted above described Front and Water Streets as housing the district's "wholesale grocers, commission merchants and mechanics connected with the shipping business." The actual occupations of the individuals listed at 15 Burling Slip, 19 Burling Slip, and 186 Front Street during the first half of the nineteenth century include cooper, grocer or wholesale fruit dealer, sailduck supplier/sailmaker, attorney shipchandler and shipmaster. The structure at 19 Burling Slip also served as a boarding house and a private residence. Directory listings within the rest of the block (along Front Street, Fulton Street, and Water Street) indicate that much of the space within the block during the first half of the nineteenth century was used by wholesale grocers and fruit dealers. Water Street during this period also housed a series of fur and crockery dealers. When 17 Burling Slip was constructed in 1843/4 it housed the offices of glue and iron manufacturers and they were joined in 1846 by paint manufacturers. The coopers in 19 Burling Slip were replaced in the 1850s by a paper manufacturer's warehouse. Similar shifts were most likely occurring in the rest of the block and throughout the district. New York's pre-Civil War ascendancy was followed by a period of decline and the seaport area was reflecting this change.

Although foreign commerce as a whole continued to rise, America's share of the carrying trade declined (Klein 1976:81). The leading shipbuilder by the 1870s was England, possessor of more advanced steam engine technology. In 1882, 46,000,000 bushels of grain were exported through New York City's port and not a single carrier was American (Klein 1976:80). The days of New York City's single port dominance had also come to an end with the development of the new western and northern trade routes (Chinitz 1960:20).

Whereas the area along the East River was historically linked to foreign trade, the area adjoining the Hudson came to be dominated by domestic shipping. Here skiffs and flatboats docked between voyages to the American south, upstate New York, and the midwest (Lockwood 1976:5). The steady decrease in foreign carrying trade changed the character of the South Street Seaport area during the last decades of the nineteenth century. After about 1870 the west side piers and their adjoining railroad facilities became the focal point of the city's maritime activity and all subsequent long range port development plans (Port of Authority 1951:11).

Another change occurring within New York City, and evident in the land use history of the Matheson Bldg is the rise of industry. Between the 1831 Federal Census of Manufactures and the 1869 Federal Census of Manufactures, the New York City area emerged as a manufacturing center. The New York region possessed both a large immigrant labor force and also facilities for processing imported raw materials. Its highly developed transportation network could carry locally produced goods as easily as the imports and exports it was already handling (Chinitz 1960:16).

During the 1840s and 50s, Cooper and Hewitt, glue and iron manufacturers, and Kieron Egan, owner of a paper and scrap warehouse, were the neighbors of the wholesale grocers, fruiterers, and fur merchants. By the 1890s these wholesalers had vanished although Egan, along with Cooper and Hewitt, remained. From

[this time through the 1920s, the block seems to have been primarily industrial. The Building Department's records and photographs from this period (Collection, South Street Seaport Library), indicate that the block housed a paint factory, a printing plant, cigar factories, and warehouses for chemicals, cork, cotton, and tobacco. Services for local workers included a drugstore, a saloon, a barbershop, and a luncheonette. An increased demand for office and industrial space within the former maritime district is evident in both the 1897 construction of the 10 story structure at 21 Burling Slip and in the 1919 incorporation of the three older buildings (15, 17, and 19 Burling Slip) into a single building, 145-9 John Street. The leasee, National Aniline and Chemical Inc., occupied both buildings (connected by interior hallways in 1919), and also 186 Front Street. Just as the merchants and speculators of the 1820s and 30s had converted Lower Manhattan's older residences into countinghouses and boarding houses, the manufacturers and businessmen converted the former countinghouses and wholesale shops to serve their own purposes.

The buildings on this block were important because their structural histories and the lives of the people who built and inhabited them are closely associated with all phases of the development of New York City's port.

Architectural Significance

155 John Street

Architecturally, this building is rather (out-of-date) in the context of New York commercial architecture. By 1897 (the date of design of 155 John Street), the Romanesque-Renaissance combination used here was a bit tired and had been superseded by a more high-style, decorative approach to the commercial building (cf. 52 Broadway, designed 1896). In any event, the facade design lacks the crispness necessary for a work in such low relief, and appears bland and loose.

George Pool Chappell (d. 1933) began his practice in 1883 in New York, and entered a partnership with Charles Bosworth in 1899. Although he is known to have designed some buildings in Brooklyn in the 1880s and early 1890s (37-43 Montgomery Place, St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Tompkins Avenue Congregational Church), none of his known commissions involves a commercial building, and he is on balance one of the more obscure members of turn of the century New York architectural practice.

145-149 John Street

The 145-149 John Street section of the building is characteristic of the design of low commercial buildings after the World War; wide, loft-type windows, concentrations and minimization of decoration, simple, straightforward facade design, and the reuse of an older building are all features of this building type (cf. 303 Fourth Avenue 1921).

James Ross (1864-1944) and Charles R. McNeil (dates unknown) formed a partnership in 1899 which lasted until the late 1930s. However longlived their practice may have been, they were by no means prominent, and their one other identified building is the Noyes Memorial Building, Litchfield, Connecticut (1901).

Architectural Description

155 John Street
Block 74, Lots 29,30

General Statement

This is a ten story steel frame building with brick exterior walls built in 1897-98 (NB 705 of 1897, George P. Chappell, architect) as "offices and warehouse". The principal elevations are executed in a mild Romanesque-Renaissance style. The condition of the actual fabric is excellent, and, except for the apparent loss of a cornice, the building has not been substantially altered in the exterior since it was built.

Exterior - South Elevation

This elevation is executed in a tan-grey brick, with detailing in light stone and a water table of granite. Overall, the design is a bit indistinct, combining elements of the Romanesque (arched windows, emphasis on brick patterning) with elements of the Renaissance (rustication or banding in the brick work, a few Classical details). This elevation is the principal one, with a Classical enframing surrounding the central doorway. The entire facade is five bays wide. The outer two bays contain single one-over-one windows from the first to the seventh floor. The central three bays contain larger window arrangements: joined, twin one-over-one windows at the first and second floors, and twin one-over-one windows separated by brick piers at the third through tenth floors. The first floor windows are topped by a stone moulding running the width of the facade (but interrupted by the doorway). The second floor windows are capped by segmental arches of brick work laid perpendicular to the soffit of the arch. The third, fourth, fifth, sixth, eighth, and ninth floor windows of the central three bays carry simple stone lintels. The seventh floor windows of the central three bays are set into half-round arches in the wall. The tenth floor windows carry a small moulding above.

The principal decorative scheme of the building is the use of ornament to imitate structural designs. The outside two bays are set in a field of banded (first and second floors) and rusticated (third-seventh floors) brick, and the inside three bays, flanked by this field, are themselves separated by two large pilasters terminated at the seventh story and capped by stylized Corinthian capitals. A small plain frieze caps the seventh story and the eighth through tenth stories are divided into five equal bays containing paired windows, except the eastern bay, which contains single windows. These five bays are separated and flanked by six pilasters carrying Corinthian capitals. The parapet wall is very plain, and extant flashing at its base suggests that the building originally had a modest cornice.

Exterior - East Elevation

The east elevation, on Front Street, is carried out on the same general scheme as the south elevation, with the following exceptions:

- a. the east elevation is only two bays wide; these bays are otherwise similar to the central three bays of the south elevation

b. there is no capital terminating the colossal pilaster at the seventh story

c. the pilasters at the eighth through tenth floors are not single, as on the south elevation, but double

Note: at the corner where the east and south elevations meet, there are letters with the legends "Burling Slip" and "Front Street" in metal letters affixed to the moulding at the top of the first story.

Exterior - North Elevation

The roofline of the adjacent building originally came to the fifth floor level, and the outline of a sloping roofline running to Front Street is still visible at that level. At that level and above there are generally six windows per floor. Two lines are shaftway windows (for the elevators), one line has been blocked up, and three lines are normal windows. The westernmost line of windows extends below the fifth floor, since that line is recessed from the adjacent lot line. The parapet wall on this elevation is interrupted by three structures - a chimney stack and two elevator bulkheads.

Exterior - West Elevation

This elevation is obscured below the fifth story level. Above that level there are three equally spaced windows per floor.

Interior - Basement

The basement carries various mechanical service systems for the building, with very plain finishes and utilitarian fittings, all of relatively recent vintage. There are some recent partition walls in various locations.

Interior - First Floor

The lobby has been altered from its historic layout, although the black and white marble floor and some wainscoting remains. The rooms off the first floor all have modern finishes. The stairway from the first floor to the roof seems to be in original condition (except for the enclosing firewalls) with iron railings and slate (?) treads, all in a very plain design. Both elevators have been modernized in various particulars. There is some trim at the ceiling level, a dentilated cornice, but this has been altered.

Interior - Second through Tenth Floors

These floors all carry modern finishes (linoleum, hung ceilings, etc.) but areas of opportunity indicate that the original finishes on the typical floor were very plain plaster, perhaps with terrazzo flooring. Bathroom areas on these floors are all modernized, and are disposed in various layouts around a plumbing core in the northwest corner of the building. There is now generally an east-west corridor on these floors, with variously partitioned offices running off it to the south.

Site

The 155 John Street building occupies the northwest corner of Front and John Streets. Although there is high-rise development one or two blocks away, especially across Water Street, the South Street Seaport ambiance is one of four and five story buildings, with which the 155 John Street building is at variance. Its relative age, though, mitigates somewhat its great bulk, but it is ultimately more akin to the office towers of the 1960s across Water Street than it is to the typical South Street Seaport buildings. Such kinship is also strengthened by the severity of design and coloring of the building, which lacks the ubiquitous red brick of the mid-nineteenth century buildings. The building does get full sun, since there are parking lots across the street, and it is relatively prominent from the foot of John Street, which is twice as wide from Front to South Streets as it is from Water to Front Streets.

145 John Street
(aka 145-149 John Street, aka 15-19 Burling Slip)
Block 74, Lots 31, 32, 33

General Statement

The building at 145 John Street is a 1919 alteration (architects: Ross & McNeil, Alt 555 of 1919) of an earlier set of three commercial buildings. The design is typical of the commercial alteration work of the period: large show windows, marginal decoration, straightforward fenestration. The architectural character has been maintained, and the actual materials of 145 John Street are in good to excellent condition.

Exterior - General Form

This squarish plot contains the remains of three separate nineteenth century buildings which were joined and refaced in 1919 and are now four stories high. The existing lot presents the principal facade on John Street, facing south, and a secondary facade on Water Street, facing west. The secondary facade, primarily the altered remains of party or lot line walls, is exposed only because Water Street has been widened, with the concomitant demolition of the former 143 John Street buildings.

Exterior - South Elevation

No pre-1919 fabric exists in the principal, south, facade.

The brickwork is a uniform light ash grey, the water table is all new (i.e. 1919) granite, and the windows, trim and related work all unquestionably date from 1919 or later. The principal facade is divided into three nearly identical bays. The lower floor in each bay has been painted black and white, and awnings and signage for the present tenant, The Yankee Clipper Restaurant, have been added. The typical lower floor bay consists of three uniform window-sized openings separated by brick piers. The extreme left-hand window-sized opening extends down to the level of the water table and is used as a doorway with an iron gate and four granite steps to the sidewalk. Excluding the doorway, each window-sized opening has been blocked up with masonry. Inspection of the finish work indicates very strongly that this lower floor configuration, one doorway at left and eight window openings along the rest of the facade, is original. This configuration is at variance with the initial plans for the alteration filed in 1919 at the Department of Buildings.

The piers separating the door and windows carry a long, plain stone frieze on which rests a projecting cornice of stone. The brick work for the upper stories begins above this. Above the first story, the bays are in fact all identical. Each floor (2nd, 3rd, and 4th) carries a single window opening with a tripartite set of double-hung, one-over-one wooden windows, set in wooden frames. Each window opening is set off on the bottom by a plain limestone sill, and on the sides and top by a single course of headers laid horizontally on the sides of the window and vertically on the top.

Although all the window openings of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors line up vertically and horizontally with one another, no stringcourses, spandrel panels or detailing connects them. Above the 4th floor windows, the brick work is carried up to a pointed gable, with no decoration save for a small cornice, light in color, which appears, because of fracturing, to be made of terra cotta. The cornice projects out beyond the building line along the sloping line of the gable. Although the sloping sections of the gable cornice are separated between the three bays, they all rest on stubby flat sections of similar material at each end, acting as small piers. The piers of the neighboring bays both rest on a small connecting cornice (identical in profile to the gable cornice) which spans the brick piers which mark each bay. Because of the continuation of the terra cotta work along the rooflines of all three bays, the roofline detailing has some of the characteristics of a Gothic label moulding, although the actual profile is more Classical in form.

Exterior - West Elevation

The Water Street facade, primarily the remains of a lot line or party wall, has been entirely grouted over. Some windows are extant on a rear, recessed section, and a former opening (perhaps a pass-through used during construction of row-type structures) is visible on this side, although of course bricked in. The first story has been covered with stucco, apparently by the restaurant tenant, which has a stoop and entrance in the center. An old, perhaps original, outline of a sloping roof is visible above the 4th floor level. A stairway bulkhead to the roof extends above the roofline on this side. All the brick work on this elevation is uneven, but it is generally common red brick with many damaged or partial bricks apparent.

Exterior - North Elevation

The north elevation, originally the back of the building(s), has been built out to varying depths. The window configuration on the eastern and central building sections is an arrangement of three windows across (per section), with apparently twentieth century two-over-two double-hung windows with stone sills and lintels. There are some tie rod plates on these elevations. The north elevation of the westernmost building section is partially built out, with windows on the shallower portion. All the window frames on the north and west elevations seem to be of the same material and styling.

Exterior - East Elevation

The east elevation, such as it is, is mostly blocked off by adjoining structures. The part that is exposed is plain, with one vertical line of windows. It also carries what appears to be a metal chimney stack from the boiler. In the northeastern corner of the building, at the roof, are the jagged remains of a former party or lot line wall, apparently a surviving section from the building subsequently replaced by 155 John Street.

Interior - Basement

The basement of 145 John Street shows the original three-building configuration, since the original foundation walls running along the lot lines appear to be intact. These are fieldstone patched with brick and penetrated in the middle by passageways connecting all three spaces. There is about six feet, floor-to-ceiling, in the basement, and some brick flooring. A passageway has also been cut through to the 155 John Street building.

Interior - First Floor

The first floor is occupied entirely by a restaurant entered through doors and a vestibule along the west facade. There is a bar along the south wall, with seating in the middle of the room. The original party or lot line walls have been replaced with steel columns, which are aligned along the old wall lines. All the fittings, furnishings, etc., are of relatively recent vintage.

Interior - Second, Third, Fourth Floors

The upper floors were all built as office space, but all the finishings are now of relatively recent vintage (linoleum, hung ceilings, office partitioning, modern fixtures). A wooden firestair runs along the west wall, but is almost certainly of 1919 vintage or later, despite its materials. Columns replacing the old party or lot line walls appear in the same locations as in the restaurant on the first floor, and firedoors have been created to the 155 John Street building; no partitioning is shown on the attached plan, but exists in various configurations.

Site

The 145 John Street building now faces a large, open group of parking lots, and adjoins the very wide Water Street. Across Water Street rises a large group of post-1950 office towers. Although the South Street Seaport docks are down at the end of John Street, 145 John itself, because of its particular prospect, does not really share in the ambiance of the South Street Seaport district.

Chain of Title

Lot 33, 15 Burling Slip

- 1801 Deed, recorded February 2, 1801 in liber 59, page 433. John and Rebecca Goodeve, John and Mary Peters, Ezekiel and Sarah Robins to Daniel Deas.
- 1822 Deed, recorded December 24, 1822 in liber 164, page 39. Heirs of James Deas to Jane Ann Thompson (granddaughter of James Deas).
- 1866 Deed, recorded April 30, 1866 in liber 974, page 391. Jane Ann Fowler (formerly Thompson) to Edward Tapp.
- 1905 Deed, recorded July 29, 1950 in liber 96, page 136. Edward Tapp, Jr. to Willard N. Baylis.
- 1912 Deed, recorded August 1, 1905 in liber 141, page 217. Willard and Kate Baylis to William J. Matheson.

After this date, Lots 29 through 33 are conveyed as a single parcel. This chain is described below.

Lot 32, 17 Burling Slip

- 1843 Deed, recorded 1843 in liber 441, page 37. Executors of William Callender to Peter Cooper.
- 1906 Deed, recorded December 21, 1906 in liber 103, page 299. Executors and Trustees of Peter Cooper and Sarah Hewitt (trustee of Peter Cooper) to Willard Baylis.
- 1923 Deed, recorded December 14, 1923 in liber 3393, page 21. Willard and Kate Baylis to William J. Matheson.

After this date, Lots 29 through 33 are conveyed as a single parcel. This chain is described below.

Lot 31, 19 Burling Slip

- 1817 Deed, recorded June 20, 1817 in liber 119, page 513. Heirs of Charles Stewart to Stephen Allen.
- 1879 Deed, recorded March 17, 1879 in liber 1491, page 41. Margaret Foote (descendant and heir of Stephen Allen) to Sarah Belden (descendant and heir of Stephen Allen), half interest. Lot 28 also conveyed.
- 1894 Deed, recorded July 2, 1894 in liber 25, page 34. Sarah Belden to James Jarvie. Lot 28 also conveyed.

1905 Deed, recorded March 1, 1905 in liber 92, page 16. James Jarvie to William J. Matheson. Lot 28 also conveyed.

After this date, Lots 29 through 33 are conveyed as a single parcel. This chain is described below.

Lots 29 and 30
182-184 Front Street
21 Burling Slip
151 John Street

1897 Deed, recorded January 6, 1897 in liber 39, page 253. Albert and Casimir Tag, trustees and executors of Charles Tag to William Matheson and Company.

1923 Deed, recorded December 14, 1923 in liber 3380, page 294. William J. Matheson and Company Limited to William J. Matheson.

After this date, Lots 29 through 33 are conveyed as a single parcel. This chain is described below.

Lots Formerly 29-33 (now 29 and 31)
145-9 and 151 John Street

After 1923, all lots, except Lot 28, conveyed as a single parcel.

1923 Deed, recorded December 28, 1923 in liber 3380, page 361. William and Harriet Matheson to Joseph Cullman.

1930 Deed, recorded January 16, 1930 in liber 3747, page 262. Joseph and Zillah Cullman to estate of Bradish Johnson.

1930 Deed, recorded May 16, 1930 in liber 3762, page 153. Estate of Bradish Johnson to Tenth Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street Corporation.

1930 Deed, recorded May 22, 1930 in liber 3761, page 218. Tenth Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street Corporation to J. S. and D. L. Reardon Realty.

1933 Deed, recorded May 18, 1933. J. S. and D. L. Reardon Realty Company to Estate of Bradish Johnson.

1946 Deed, recorded November 4, 1946 in liber 4473, page 312. Estate of Bradish Johnson to Eugene Jauregli.

1946 Deed, recorded November 4, 1946 in liber 4473, page 295. Eugene Jauregli to Nassau Estates.

1969 Deed, recorded January 23, 1969 in liber 129, page 263. Nassau Estates to Seaport Holdings, Inc.

1969 Deed, recorded July 11, 1969 in liber 145, page 1921 (reel). Seaport Holdings, Inc. to Torpwood Corporation.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

145 John Street
Block 74, Lots 31, 32, 33
Irregular rectangular lot:

Front (John Street): 61' 2"
Depth (Water Street): 60'
Depth (east side): 45' (approximate)
Rear (north side): 34'

155 John Street
Block 74, Lots 29, 30
Irregular rectangular lot:

Front (John Street): 66'
Depth (Front Street): 42' 10 3/4"
Depth (west side): 44' 4"
Rear (north side): 64' 5"

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albion, Robert
1939 The rise of New York port. Charles Scribners and Sons. New York.
- Allan, Stephen
1927 The memoirs of Stephen Allen. Edited by John Travis.
- Anonymous
n.d. The life of Stephen Allen.
- Chinitz, Benjamin
1960 Freight and the metropolis: the impact of America's transport region. New York Metropolitan Region Study. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Fein, Albert
1976 Centennial New York. In New York: The Centennial Years. Edited by Milton Klein.
- Hurlbut Paper Company
1934 Hurlbut papermaker gentleman. Vol. 2, No. 2.
- King, Charles
1843 A memoir of the construction cost and capacity of the Croton aquaduct. Charles King, New York.
- Lankton, Larry
1979 Manhattan lifeline: engineering the old Croton aquaduct 1833-1842. Historic American Engineering Record, Washington D.C.
- Nevins, Allan
1935 Abram S. Hewitt, with some account of Peter Cooper. Harper and Brothers, New York.
- Port of Authority
1951 The port of New York from colonial days to the present. New York.
- Rosebrook, Ellen Fletcher
1977 Sidewalk history. South Street Seaport Museum, New York.

Unpublished Materials

- Tax Records, Second Ward, Municipal Archives, New York City
- Building Department Records, New York City Department of Buildings, New York City
- New York City Directories, New York Historical Society, New York City
- Deeds, Hall of Records, 31 Chambers Street, New York City

Project Information

Prior to demolition, the William J. Matheson Building was recorded by:

Soil Systems, Inc., Marietta, Georgia
Amy Friedlander, Ph.D. - Principal Investigator
Wendy Harris - Historian
Christopher Gray - Office for Metropolitan History